

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A centrifuge tube having a closed distal end and an open proximal end, with integral hinge elements at opposing sides thereof for facilitating compression flattening of the centrifuge tube.
2. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein the tube has a conical distal portion.
3. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein the open proximal end of the centrifuge tube comprises coupling structure for matingly engagement with a cap.
4. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, further comprising a cap matingly engagable with coupling structure at the proximal open end of the centrifuge tube.
5. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein the integral hinge elements are diametrically opposite one another.
6. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein the centrifuge tube comprises concave depressions on an exterior surface of the tube, opposingly facing one another, between the respective integral hinge elements.
7. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, formed by a molding technique selected from the group consisting of extrusion blow molding and rotational molding.
8. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, having an inner diameter on the order of 1 inch.
9. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, having a length of from about 3 to about 8 inches.
10. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein each of the integral hinge elements extends along substantially the full length of the tube between its proximal and distal ends.

11. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein each of the integral hinge elements extends along only part of the length of the tube between its proximal and distal ends.
12. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein each of the integral hinge elements comprises a ridged structure.
13. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein each of the integral hinge elements comprises a corrugated protrusion structure.
14. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, wherein each of the integral hinge elements comprises a protrusion of generally triangular cross-section.
15. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, formed of a polymer selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene, polyvinylchloride, polybutylene and polyurethane.
16. The centrifuge tube of claim 1, formed of polypropylene.
17. A centrifuge tube having a closed distal end and an open proximal end, with an elongate main body portion of generally cylindrical form, with integral hinge elements at opposing sides of the main body portion, extending longitudinally along at least a portion of the length thereof, whereby manual compressive pressure exerted on respective exterior surfaces of the main body portion between the integral hinge elements will effect flattening of the tube at a region of compression of the main body portion.
18. A specimen collection kit comprising a centrifuge tube as in claim 1, a cap matably engagable with the proximal open end of the centrifuge tube, and a swab article for specimen collection.
19. A specimen collection kit comprising a centrifuge tube as in claim 17, a cap matably engagable with the proximal open end of the centrifuge tube, and a swab article for specimen collection.

20. A method of making a compressively flattenable centrifuge tube, comprising molding the centrifuge tube with integral hinge elements at opposing sides thereof, wherein said molding comprises extrusion blow molding or rotational molding.